

# Strategy Research Project

## THE DRAWDOWN IN EUROPE – TOO MUCH, TOO SOON

BY

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by

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## ABSTRACT

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The United States has been a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization since its creation sixty years ago. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall twenty years ago the United States Army has dramatically reduced its footprint in Western Europe. The planned endstate of the latest reduction will leave two combat brigades stationed in Europe – the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment in Vilseck, Germany and the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vicenza, Italy. The strategic implications of the reductions are numerous. Must we maintain a strong role in the NATO alliance as the world “flattens” and we continue to face emerging threats to our security? The purpose of this paper is to discuss the strategic implications of drawing down our forces in Europe, specifically the impact on our role within the NATO alliance. This paper examines why the United States needs to continue its membership in the NATO alliance, the advantages and disadvantages of our presence in Europe, and recommends a force structure consisting of four combat brigades to meet our security goals now and for the foreseeable future.

## THE DRAWDOWN IN EUROPE – TOO MUCH, TOO SOON

In the years immediately following World War Two, Europe became polarized as the Soviet Union built a group of Communist satellite states in Eastern Europe. On March 5, 1946, in a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill famously proclaimed that “an iron curtain has descended across the continent” of Europe.<sup>1</sup> This Iron Curtain separated Germany as the country was split into East and West and the Cold War began. In response to this potential threat to the security and existence of the states of Western Europe, the United States, Canada, and the countries of Western Europe (minus Germany) formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on April 4, 1949, “as a measure of collective security against any potential Soviet aggression.”<sup>2</sup> Six years later in May 1955, the Soviet Union formalized its eastern European Communist satellite states into the Warsaw Pact in response to the addition of Germany to the NATO alliance.<sup>3</sup>

The NATO alliance accomplished its mission as it deterred possible Soviet aggression for over forty years. The fall of the Iron Curtain began in November 1989 as the world witnessed the destruction of the Berlin Wall and thousands of eastern Europeans crossing freely to the west. By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union had dissolved into separate states and the very reason for NATO’s original purpose no longer existed.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of disbanding and declaring its mission accomplished, members of the alliance believed that it still served a purpose in providing internal European security, mainly to the new and fragile states of Eastern Europe. More recently it has provided for the security of fragile states outside of Europe. However, since the attacks of

September 11, 2001 the NATO alliance has been put under significant stress as the United States and its European allies disagreed on how to address threats, and in some cases, what constituted a threat.<sup>5</sup> Additional stresses have been created by the emergence of the European Union, which some experts argue has eliminated the need for NATO.<sup>6</sup>

Since the end of the Cold War, much debate has occurred over United States force structure in Europe. The United States Army in Europe built a combat force of four heavy divisions (1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division, 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division), two cavalry regiments, and three separate maneuver brigades (a total of 17 maneuver brigades) at the height of the Cold War. Following Operation Desert Storm the United States began to significantly reduce its combat forces from seventeen combat brigades to the current level of four. This reduction was congressionally mandated to continue in 2005 with the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission's (BRAC) decision to return the First Armored Division and First Infantry Division, along with their Europe-based brigades, back to the United States by 2012.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and determine the need for continued participation of the United States in the NATO alliance, or if a new security arrangement is more appropriate, given the collapse of the Soviet Union, the current and foreseeable security situation, and the emergence of a strengthening European Union. In studying the future role of NATO an analysis of United States forces stationed in Europe is essential. Too large of a force in Europe wastes American dollars and resources. A force that is too small may fail to meet American and NATO strategic objectives.

## The NATO Advantage

It is hard to imagine a world without the United States as a part of NATO. But many experts question why the United States should continue to participate in the NATO alliance. However, significant reasons exist which warrant United States participation in the NATO alliance. First, as evidenced by International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations in Afghanistan, the NATO alliance still complements United States strategic efforts. Second, an active partnership in NATO allows the United States to maintain influence in a strengthening Europe, and act as a balance to the European Union. Third, United States military presence in Europe continues to offer strategic advantages now and into the foreseeable future in supporting the United States' security strategy. Fourth, United States standing in the world has declined significantly since 9/11, and withdrawing from NATO would accentuate the decline. Finally, the United States and our European partners face common security threats and can more effectively address these threats through a formal alliance.

## NATO Complements United States Security Strategy

In the security environment that exists today, and will continue to exist in the foreseeable future, the United States cannot be successful without coalition or alliance partners. As witnessed by operations in Afghanistan, NATO forces can complement United States strategic efforts throughout the globe. NATO partners bring different capabilities, perspectives, and experience that complement United States military power. Effective alliances can help the United States achieve strategic goals by providing additional forces, manning "secondary" missions to allow the United States to focus elsewhere, and provide an even larger intelligence network to support United

States efforts, e.g., in the Global War on Terrorism. The United States and European intelligence communities have cooperated significantly, even before the onset of the Global War on Terrorism.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, NATO has complemented the United States' efforts in the Global War on Terrorism with maritime patrolling in the Mediterranean and is now training security forces in Iraq.<sup>9</sup>

The media has focused on the strategic disagreements between the United States and some of its NATO partners with respect to Iraq. While Germany publicly argued against an invasion of Iraq, they took less public steps that helped the United States accomplish its objectives in Iraq. For example, German military forces provided security at American military posts throughout Germany in 2003 and 2004, which had been consuming a brigade combat team of United States combat power per division in Europe since the attacks on September 11, 2001. Germany's assistance allowed the First Armored Division to deploy to Iraq in 2003 and the First Infantry Division the following year. In addition, NATO forces took over operations in Bosnia and continued operations in Kosovo, which allowed the United States to focus its efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The enduring nature of an alliance, compared to a temporary coalition, leads to more effective operations due to mutual familiarity with processes of the forces working together. NATO and other coalition partners currently provide about one-third of the military forces in Afghanistan – performing many supporting roles that free American forces for the primary mission of securing the Afghan people and defeating Al Qaeda. NATO also pledged 7,000 additional troops in December 2009 to support the United States' operational surge in Afghanistan. Current and future operations are, and will

continue to be, predominantly multilateral efforts. The United States cannot achieve its long term strategic objectives, or sustain current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, unilaterally. As of December 22, 2009, each of the 28 member countries of NATO has contributed forces to ISAF. Our NATO partners currently provide 35,508 of the 84,150 troops, or 42% of the force deployed in Afghanistan. Absent this NATO contribution the United States would need approximately seven more brigades of combat power in addition to the recent 30,000 troop surge approved by President Obama. Combined with current commitments in Iraq, the military would be even more significantly stressed to meet the requirement.

#### Maintaining Influence in Europe

A second argument for maintaining an active partnership in the NATO alliance is that NATO allows the United States to maintain influence on the European continent, which continues to strengthen both economically and politically since the creation of the European Union. The European Union began as an economic union and has recently made strides in growing as a political union. Initially focused on economic and financial issues, the European Union has also expanded its efforts into creating a defense and security entity in direct competition with NATO. At the Cologne European Council in 1999 the members stated that “the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action backed by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and the readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises without prejudice to actions by NATO.”<sup>10</sup> This statement can easily be interpreted as an effort to challenge United States influence on the European continent. Other European leaders also made comments critical of United States influence on the European continent. French President Jacques Chirac stated that “we need a means to struggle against American

hegemony.”<sup>11</sup> French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine stated that “we cannot accept...the unilateralism of the ...American megapower” that acts “without consulting others, making decisions based on its own view of the world and its own interests.”<sup>12</sup>

Maintaining a European Union military arm allows the European Union to conduct military operations without the direct United States influence that exists within NATO. The European Union has conducted six military operations to date separate from NATO under the name of EUFOR.<sup>13</sup> From the German and greater European perspective, “the European Union has unique possibilities for combining the use of military and civilian instruments.”<sup>14</sup> The United States uses the instruments of power (diplomacy, information, military, economic) when confronting international security issues. European Union members see NATO as being limited to utilizing only the military instrument, but having to turn to the European Union for the other instruments. This is a valid argument from the European perspective.

A significant risk of NATO operating in conjunction with a European Union that utilizes the same military forces as NATO is that the situation can lead to significant conflicts within the alliance and weaken its ability to counter threats. A European Union with its own military component would gain more influence on the continent, which should be viewed positively, as Europeans take responsibility for their security, but also enhances French and German desires to “counterbalance the United States on the international stage.”<sup>15</sup> Internal strife within the alliance created by United States – European Union disagreement can reduce the effectiveness of the alliance and, once again, result in the United States acting unilaterally in addressing threats as it has in the past.

## US Forces Strategic Posture in Europe

A strong United States presence in Europe represents commitment to the NATO alliance. The current United States Army force structure in Europe, which includes four brigade combat teams and logistical units, offers the United States several strategic advantages, i.e., forward-deployed forces to maintain an active NATO partnership and forces with logistical infrastructure that can effectively support operations in the USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USAFRICOM combatant command areas of responsibility. In a March 2009 interview, General Carter Ham, the United States Army Europe (USAREUR) commander, publicly recommended that the Pentagon cancel plans to redeploy two of the four maneuver brigades in USAREUR back to the United States in 2012.<sup>16</sup> He has continued to stress maintaining the four brigades in subsequent interviews and speeches, citing the training and logistical benefits of maintaining the additional forces in Europe.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, an active partnership in which higher staffs work together on a daily basis and tactical units conduct multinational training set the conditions for success in military operations because relationships have been established, staff processes standardized, and units are more familiar with alliance partner tactical doctrine.<sup>18</sup>

The four brigade combat teams in question are the 170<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team (formerly 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division) in Baumholder, Germany; 172<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team (formerly 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division) in Grafenwoehr, Germany; 2<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Cavalry Regiment in Vilseck, Germany; and the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team in Vicenza, Italy. The three brigade combat teams in Germany are well located, either near major training areas or an aerial port of embarkation. Each brigade also has access to sea ports of embarkation. The fourth brigade combat team, the 173<sup>rd</sup>

Airborne Brigade, is also well-located in northern Italy, near Aviano Air Base, and has supported numerous operations throughout the globe from their home base. The 170<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team, which is slated to redeploy to the United States, is located in Baumholder, located near the Kaiserslautern – Ramstein military logistics, medical, and air transport hub, which has proven its strategic value to the United States during the Global War on Terrorism. The four brigade combat teams are well-postured to support the United States' global security strategy.

A presence of four brigade combat teams allows the Army to support current operations in the Global War on Terrorism with one or two of these forward-deployed brigades, while having the other brigade combat teams available to support NATO operations, such as partnership exercises with new NATO partners in Eastern Europe. NATO has played a significant role in supporting operations in Afghanistan with ISAF and will continue to be a key partner in the Global War on Terrorism. Maintaining our presence in Europe is a strong sign of our commitment to NATO and facilitates our ability to influence the alliance.

As our enemies in the Global War on Terrorism open new fronts on the African continent, combined with the existence of failed states such as Somalia and other failing states, we must be postured to counter these potential threats. Our forward-deployed presence in Europe also provides readily available forces and infrastructure to support possible contingencies with the recently activated Africa Command, located in Stuttgart, Germany. Combat forces in Europe, combined with a developed infrastructure, can easily support operations outside the USEUCOM area of responsibility, as seen during

multiple deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom by United States forces based in Europe.

### United States' Reputation

The United States' standing in the world declined significantly since the events of 9/11. After initial international support from the western world for the country's plight, the United States government's responses and actions in the new Global War on Terrorism began to alienate allies and bring significant differences into the limelight. Immediately following the attacks of 9/11, the NATO Council approved invoking Article 5 of the treaty, which states that an attack on one member of the alliance is deemed as an attack on all of its members – the only time this has occurred in the history of NATO.<sup>19</sup> The United States then responded to this significant event in the history of the alliance by declining NATO assistance, and initially conducting operations in Afghanistan unilaterally.

As the United States began the process of building a coalition to invade Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003, the different views of dealing with Iraq stressed the alliance. Numerous public comments by Bush administration officials further alienated allies who disagreed with the United States' Iraq policy. Attitudes within the Bush administration were revealed even before the administration was in power, in the writings of future Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who wrote that "those who refuse to support you [the United States] will live to regret having done so."<sup>20</sup> In January 2003, in response to a Dutch reporter's question about international support for Iraq, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that, "Germany has been a problem, and France has been a problem...but...other countries in Europe. They're not with France and Germany on this; they're with the United States. Germany and France represent 'old

Europe'."<sup>21</sup> In February 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell spoke at the United Nations and presented evidence of Iraq's violations of previous United Nations resolutions, as well as the United States' argument for more direct action, a position the United Nations did not endorse. The next month, the United States invaded Iraq without any form of United Nations support. In August 2004, as the main NATO partners continued to not participate in Iraq, President Bush announced that the United States would significantly reduce its military presence in Europe.<sup>22</sup> The reduction had been years in the planning, but the timing was viewed by some in Europe as a response to "old" Europe's lack of participation in the "coalition of the willing."<sup>23</sup> Despite official positions endorsing a strong NATO, United States government officials were making comments and taking actions publicly that hinted NATO's time had passed. If the United States were to withdraw from the NATO alliance, the action would be viewed negatively by much of the world, and continue to weaken the United States politically in the international community. A departure from NATO would be seen as isolationist and a continuation of American desires to act unilaterally, or simply with coalitions of convenience. The United States' previous period of isolationism preceded World War II and can arguably be attributed to contributing to the reemergence of Germany as a military power.

### Common Threats

The United States and Europe still face significant common threats such as terrorism, disruption of oil supplies, and weapons of mass destruction proliferation.<sup>24</sup> Lord George Robertson, NATO Secretary General at the time of the 9/11 attacks, stated that terrorism would be the key global security threat in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and would require a global response from NATO as well.<sup>25</sup> Lord Robertson also expressed support

for the Bush administration's policy of using preemptive military strikes by stressing that, "those who set out to die in support of their ill-conceived causes are unlikely to be deterred through traditional means."<sup>26</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has redefined and expanded its purpose, as evidenced by its participation in Afghanistan, to meet these new threats. Facing future threats together as an alliance, rather than individually, or as temporary coalitions, is more efficient and effective.

Robert Kagan, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and husband of a former US ambassador to NATO, argues that, "the existence of Muslim fundamentalism may force Americans and Europeans to defend themselves against devastating attack, and even to cooperate in providing a common defense. But it does not force 'the West' to prove itself unified and coherent, as Soviet communism once had."<sup>27</sup> I agree that Muslim extremists do not pose the threat that the Soviet Union once did, but do feel that they are a significant enough threat to maintain a partnership that shares intelligence assets, and contributes to the mutual effort as witnessed in Afghanistan with ISAF. The Cold War was a war of political and economic ideologies, democracy and capitalism versus oligarchy and communism. The threat offered by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact was considered a grave threat to the way of life in Western Europe and the United States. The threat offered by Islamic extremists is not of the level of the former Soviet Union, but is significant enough to the United States and Europe to be seen as mutual given the deaths of thousands of their citizens as a result of attacks in New York City, London, Paris, and Madrid. This threat could increase significantly if groups such as Al Qaeda succeed in their quest to acquire a weapon of mass destruction. This, coupled with rogue nations such as Iran or North Korea developing or

already possessing nuclear weapons, is a significant common threat to the countries of NATO. Working closely together, sharing intelligence and attacking terrorist threats as an active alliance offers a greater chance of long term success in minimizing the threat, compared to temporary coalitions built in reaction to a terrorist event.

### Objections to NATO Participation

Some experts argue that the United States should no longer participate in the NATO alliance. Numerous rationales have been offered by political experts and politicians against the United States' continued membership in NATO. One of the most argued positions is that the end of the Cold War brought about an end to the very reason for NATO's existence. Some experts have also argued that Europe and the United States view common security issues with ever-increasing divergent perspectives, which impacts our ability to operate as a formal alliance. Additionally, actions and comments by the United States leadership since 9/11 have argued that the use of temporary coalitions can meet our strategic security needs. Other critics have also argued that members of the European Union / NATO are extremely reluctant to resort to military force, and rely more on diplomacy and legal instruments than the United States, as evidenced by the initial European response in Bosnia and Kosovo, and their lack of support for initial United States actions in Iraq in 2003 (except for Great Britain). Others have long argued that the countries of Western Europe have focused more of their resources internally on expensive social systems, leaving the United States to spend more than its share in the security of Europe. Finally, an argument made by some in times of rapidly increasing deficits and national debt is that the monetary cost of NATO is no longer necessary and a simple cost saving if the United States leaves the alliance.

## Why Do We Need NATO?

Many experts argue that the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union ended the need for NATO, whose original purpose as an alliance was to counter possible Soviet aggression into Western Europe. Thomas Risse, director of the Center for Transnational Relations, Foreign and Security Policy at the University of Berlin, argues that, “the end of the Cold War, the maturation of Europe, the differential impact of 9/11 on strategic priorities...are the underlying causes of the tensions that have emerged between the United States and Europe.”<sup>28</sup> An alliance over the course of sixty years is likely to have tension and disagreement over responses to common threats due to differing perspectives and capabilities. The end of the Cold War released other tensions in Europe, specifically in the former Yugoslavia, that required United States’ capabilities to control. Europe is still maturing as many of the smaller states of Eastern Europe need Western assistance to grow and prosper. NATO plays a key role in the maturation of the new democracies in Eastern Europe.

As the international security environment has changed, NATO has changed to meet the threat, shifting from a collective defense organization to a collective security organization.<sup>29</sup> As discussed earlier in this paper, NATO’s contributions in Afghanistan and our Europe-based infrastructure have been critical to our ability to execute the Global War on Terrorism. The United States needs the permanent alliance of NATO, and the European countries need the global reach of the United States, to meet the global threat offered by Islamic extremists.

## Divergent Perspectives

As discussed earlier, Europe and the United States have common security threats, but those threats are viewed with ever-increasing divergent perspectives and

disagreement on how to counter those threats.<sup>30</sup> Much of the western world now faces the threat of terrorism and is working together to combat terrorism. Europeans view terrorism as an internal threat to be handled as a crime or a police matter, while the United States views terrorism as an external threat to be countered militarily.<sup>31</sup> The attacks of 9/11 were viewed by the United States government as an act of war and declared that the Global War on Terrorism had begun. Europeans disagreed. Even after the terror attacks in Paris, Madrid, and London, Europeans do not feel as if they are at war, but are instead confronted with the criminal act of terrorism as they have for decades.<sup>32</sup>

The history of the United States and Europe impacts their perspectives.<sup>33</sup> European history has contributed to Europeans having more liberal views than the Americans. For example, vast differences in societal views on the death penalty and gun ownership impact these perspectives.<sup>34</sup> The death and destruction of World War II in Europe still impacts it today, and Europeans generally feel that diplomacy should be used more often and, in the case of Iraq, been given more time to work.<sup>35</sup> Many Europeans feel that Saddam Hussein was not a significant threat that necessarily needed to be removed, but contained, which had been the policy of the Clinton administration.<sup>36</sup> Europeans feel that the threat posed by Iran, Iraq, and North Korea has been overstated by the United States.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, Europeans do not feel that democracy promotion should be a key component of foreign policy.<sup>38</sup> They also feel that military action should not be taken without a United Nations Security Council mandate.<sup>39</sup>

Europeans have been living with terrorist incidents within their borders for many years, and these attacks were generally planned and originated within their borders. The attacks of 9/11 were originated in Afghanistan, which called for a military, not a police, response, therefore causing a divergence in views of terrorism as an external versus internal threat. The divergence of what constituted a threat was clearly seen in 2003 when Germany and France did not provide forces in support of United States operations in Iraq, citing a lack of a United Nations resolution and a desire for more diplomatic efforts.<sup>40</sup> Despite these varying perspectives, the partners of NATO have shown their agreement that the instability of Afghanistan is a threat to the security of NATO as a whole, and have responded with the International Security Assistance Force.

### Temporary Coalitions

Others argue that temporary coalitions are sufficient in addressing the current threat, relieving the United States of the burden of a permanent alliance. Operation Desert Storm is a good example of a successful temporary coalition. Some of the countries assisting our efforts recently in Afghanistan and Iraq are not permanent, formal allies, but have joined the United States in a temporary coalition to confront a common threat.

Initial operations in Afghanistan showed our capability to act unilaterally and not restrained by the additional friction of acting in a multilateral fashion. However, the initial operations were on a small scale with a short timeline and conducted with primarily special operations forces with the mission to find and defeat Al Qaeda and remove the Taliban from power. As the mission grew to include creating a government and building a national army and police force, the participation of NATO as the

International Security Assistance Force became necessary. Twenty-eight of the forty-three nations contributing forces to ISAF are NATO members and contribute 97% of the personnel on the ground.

Operations in Iraq were initially conducted with mainly United States and British forces. As the mission in Iraq shifted to counterinsurgency and nation building, the United States required the assistance of other countries. Operations in Iraq are now being conducted by a temporary coalition. The United States can succeed against current threats using temporary coalitions, but the marriage of a permanent alliance is more efficient and, in the case of the NATO alliance, offers the United States significant military infrastructure forward to better prosecute the fight against international terrorism and interact with our partners. Current and future operations will continue to be predominantly multilateral efforts, and the United States cannot achieve its long term strategic objectives, or sustain current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, unilaterally. As stated earlier, the contributions of NATO in Afghanistan are critical to our success in the current war. The Global War on Terrorism is a fight against global terrorist organizations, and requires a global response to succeed.

### Reluctance to Use Military Force

Other critics argue that many European members of NATO are extremely reluctant to resort to military force, and prefer to rely more on diplomacy and legal instruments than the United States.<sup>41</sup> A basis for this reluctance is Europe's unique and violent history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as Europe served as one of the main battlegrounds for two world wars. In the span of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe went from massive death and destruction caused by conflict to the pursuit of an ideal collection of peaceful states within the European Union.<sup>42</sup> This recent history significantly influences the European

desire to use the diplomatic, informational, and economic instruments of power more than the military instrument. Also, because of this history, the European members of NATO feel that, “there should be a commitment by the transatlantic community to first seek approval by the UN Security Council for any ‘out-of-area’ intervention.”<sup>43</sup> This approval was given prior to operations in Afghanistan in the form of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1368, but not prior to the United States’ attack into Iraq.

### Internal Focus

European nations, in general, focus more of their resources on internal security, economic, and social issues, and have relatively small defense budgets and force structure. The United States treasury has significantly contributed to the security of Europe over the past sixty years. The smaller defense budgets of European countries have long been a source of tension between the United States government and the NATO member governments. Congress has long called for Europe to bear more of a share of costs of the security burden.<sup>44</sup> The United States has born more of the cost sharing burden than the 26 European Defense Agency countries (1.69% vs. 4.5% of GDP in 2007).<sup>45</sup> In addition, the United States spent five times the amount of money in future investment, i.e., equipment, research and development, in 2007 than Europe, a clear indicator of political priorities being significantly different between the partners.<sup>46</sup> During the Cold War, the nuclear deterrent provided by the United States “deprived Europeans of the incentive to spend the kind of money that would have been necessary to restore them to military great-power status.”<sup>47</sup>

But these different defense spending levels are, once again, a matter of perspective. The United States defense spending is approximately equal to what the rest of the world spends on defense.<sup>48</sup> The argument can easily be made that the

United States spends too much, rather than our NATO allies not spending enough. It can also be argued that European lack of defense spending is the fault of the United States, given the “security umbrella” that the United States has willingly provided since the end of World War II.<sup>49</sup>

Western Europeans have used the security “free ride” provided by the United States security strategy of the containment of the Soviet Union and communism to rebuild themselves economically into a combined European Union economic force almost equal to that of the United States.<sup>50</sup> This security umbrella also allowed NATO countries the ability to build the strong social welfare programs preferred by many Europeans that provides social equality.<sup>51</sup> European Union nations have limited defense spending in the past to support social programs such as pension funding.<sup>52</sup> However, the European Union has used its increased economic power in spending more per capita than the United States on foreign aid.<sup>53</sup> This is another example of how the European Union often confronts strategic issues differently than the United States, and may not be as internally focused as some experts believe.

### Cost

A simple argument during this time of growing budget deficits, national debt, and economic difficulties is that contributing financially to the NATO alliance is not necessary. NATO financial contributions are based upon a long-used cost sharing formula that uses each nation’s gross domestic product.<sup>54</sup> NATO’s budget is divided into three categories, civil, military, and security investment program (infrastructure), of which the United States contributes anywhere from 21% to 26%, depending on the category.<sup>55</sup> The civil budget comes out of the State Department budget, while the military and security investment program are paid by Defense Department funds.<sup>56</sup> In

FY2009 the United States contributed \$721 million dollars to the NATO alliance, which was approximately .14% of the US defense budget in FY2009.<sup>57</sup> In addition, when NATO forces deploy, the country contributing the forces pays the costs. Given the number of NATO forces in Afghanistan, the United States is saving money by being in the NATO alliance.

### Conclusion

This paper has presented five significant reasons for the United States to maintain a presence in the NATO alliance and examined some arguments for leaving the alliance. The world has become more complex since the end of the Cold War and a permanent, rather than temporary, partnership will lead to a more stable global environment. A force structure with only two brigade combat teams is insufficient to support the NATO alliance and effectively interact with our NATO partners, or to support our global security strategy.

In Europe, less than fifty years after the end of World War II, former enemies came together as the European Union for their common welfare. The United States must strengthen its partnership with the NATO alliance and maintain a significant military presence in Europe, while strongly voicing concern over the creation of a European Union military arm. Competition for dual-hatted forces and efforts by some European Union members to operate without United States influence will limit the United States' ability to achieve some strategic security objectives and weaken the NATO alliance. As presented in this paper, the Bush administration did much to stress the partnership with our European allies by its actions and words. The stress on the transatlantic alliance was largely the result of differing opinions on how to deal with Iraq, a debate that existed within our own country as well. The differences between the

United States and its NATO partners are largely due to different perspectives and history, not due to divergent security goals. These common security goals are more effectively attained by working together as a formal, permanent alliance and not as a temporary coalition.

## Endnotes

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<sup>15</sup> Kirsten Archick and Paul Gallis, "NATO and the European Union," *CRS Report for Congress*, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 4, 2005), 14.

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